

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Town Hall
March 3, 2004
Meeting Minutes

ATTENDING Co-chairs: Richard Cheek & Lydia Ogilby. Members: Paul Bell, Linn Hobbs (second half), Arleyn Levee, Richard Pichette, Nancy Richards, Michael Smith, Sharon Vanderslice. Volunteers: Matthew Genta and Lisa Harrington. Absent: Caroline Darbyshire.

HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

Lisa Harrington presented a second draft of design guidelines for homeowners in the Pleasant Street Historic District. She also presented a color guide assembled by SPNEA (The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities), which specifies appropriate paint colors for houses of different historic periods. This guide could be made available to District residents.

Commission members discussed how proposed paint colors should be approved in the future, and decided by a vote of 5-3 that owners who wished to repaint their houses should inform the Commission in writing of their intention to do so, and provide a color chip for approval by the Co-chair or another designated member of the Commission. These owners would not be required to appear before the full Commission at its monthly meeting.

The Commission also discussed enforcement issues. Richard Cheek reminded the members that building permits may not be issued for houses in the District without a signed Certificate of Appropriateness or Certificate of Non-Applicability from the Historic District Commission. Due to time constraints, members decided to discuss the issue of how to work with owners who disregard Commission guidelines at a future meeting.

Additional comments on Ms. Harrington's draft should be forwarded to her via email. These will be incorporated into the next draft.

TRAPELO ROAD REZONING

Matthew Genta reported that he had assembled a "living room drive-by" on CD of all Belmont buildings on the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street corridor. He photographed 231 structures in all, and suggested that 15 of these properties were architecturally significant.

Other properties may be significant for historical reasons—those that have housed famous residents, for example. Mr. Genta invited members to call him and come by his home at their convenience, but no later than March 7, to review the CD and decide which buildings should be considered by the Commission to be worthy of preservation. Town Historian Richard Betts will also be invited to review the CD. In addition to certain religious and retail buildings (and the Waverley Square fire station), Paul Bell noted that clusters of more modest, three-family homes could be worth saving as groups.

After receiving comments from members, Mr. Genta will forward a list of properties recommended for preservation to the Belmont Planning Board on March 8. The Planning Board is in the process of drafting proposed new zoning by-laws for this corridor.

WAVERLEY FIRE STATION

Lisa Harrington will represent the Historic District Commission at an upcoming meeting of the Fire Station Re-Use Steering Committee. This committee has discussed some new uses that would alter the fenestration and the window openings. Ms. Harrington will inform the committee of state and federal tax incentives that apply to developers who preserve the exterior of historic properties.

PRESERVATION SEMINAR

PreservatiON MASS is willing to hold a Historic Preservation Workshop in the town of Belmont for members of the Belmont Historic District Commission, members of historic commissions from surrounding towns, and other interested residents. Commission members agreed that Thursday, April 29 would be a convenient date to host this meeting. Arleyn Levee will reserve a site and confirm the date with Elsa Fitzgerald of PreservatiON MASS.

MCLEAN TELECOM TOWER

Richard Cheek said that the Commission had received a letter from the Massachusetts Historical Commission concerning the Town's installation of a new telecommunications tower in the McLean Hospital National Register District, asking the Commission to comment on site selection. Richard Pichette, who is also a member of the McLean Land Management Committee, said that there are a limited number of places where this tower can be located. He will contact Town Planner Timothy Higgins for more information.

PLEASANT STREET RECONSTRUCTION

The Commission unanimously approved a draft of a letter to be sent to the Belmont Board of Selectmen concerning the burial of cable wires in the Pleasant Street Historic District during the upcoming road reconstruction. Since the Town is currently renegotiating its contract with Comcast, this is an opportune time to request that this work be done by the company as a condition of the new contract.

Sharon Vanderslice reported that bids for the reconstruction project are now due to be opened by Mass Highway on March 16, with construction to start in the spring.

MINUTES

The minutes of the February meeting will be reviewed at the April meeting.

Minutes recorded by Sharon Vanderslice.